

KEHOE'S CORNER

News from the office of Senator Christine Kehoe



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Local Government, Chair
Budget and Fiscal Review
Energy, Utilities
and Communications

Natural Resources & Water
Transportation & Housing
Joint Committee on
Homeland Security and
Emergency Services, Chair

Legislative Update – New Laws for 2006

My first year serving as your State Senator for the 39th District was quite a year! It is an honor to serve you, and I am privileged to be part of the team working on long-term solutions to some of California's biggest challenges.

As Chair of both the Senate Local Government Committee and the Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security, I have held a series of workshops this year which have focused on two important issues: the use of eminent domain and our state's emergency response capabilities. During these legislative hearings I heard from industry experts, as well many constituents who testified before the committees. I always appreciate hearing from you and look forward to working together in the coming year on viable solutions.

In addition to these two important matters, this year I remained committed to proposing legislation to benefit you and all Californians. I am pleased to report that Governor Schwarzenegger signed several of my bills into law. Here are a few:

- **Disaster Relief** - Provides financial relief to the counties of San Diego, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino for the costs incurred in dealing with this past winter's storms (SB 457)
- **Weed and Vegetation Management** - Clarifies the brush reduction exemption that requires landowners to remove certain vegetation that may be a fire hazard to their homes and defines "weeds" in order to encompass all vegetation that may pose a fire hazard (SB 502).
- **Homeowners insurance** - Protects California's insured homeowners in the event of a state of emergency in which their home is damaged or destroyed, by granting them up to 24 months of living expenses (the money used to pay for temporary housing) while their homes are being repaired or rebuilt (SB 518).
- **Before and After School Programs** - Allows the state-funded After School Education and Safety Programs, also known as "6-to-6" programs, to run more efficiently and better serve the community by giving the program greater flexibility on attendance-based funding requirements (SB 707).
- **San Diego Net Metering** – Increases the net metering cap for the SDG&E service area, enabling residents, businesses, and governments to sell their excess energy produced back to SDG&E (SB 816).
- **Animal Cruelty** - Bans the sale of puppies younger than 8 weeks unless the seller is an animal shelter or a veterinarian approves the sale (SB 914)
- **Energy Efficiency** - Will protect California's environment by ensuring that the state meets its future energy needs with a particular emphasis on promoting energy efficiency (SB 1037).

In addition to my bills, over 700 new laws will go into effect in 2006. Here are some you may be interested in:

- **Battery recycling:** Requires stores that sell rechargeable batteries to accept those batteries for recycling, reuse or proper disposal starting in July 2006. The law exempts grocery stores and stores with sales of less than \$1 million a year (AB 1125).

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Go to

www.leginfo.ca.gov

for detailed information
on legislation

- **Domestic partners:** Allows domestic partners to transfer private property to each other without triggering a reassessment and taxation at current market value (SB 565).
- **Junk faxes:** Bans the sending of unsolicited advertising faxes from California and allows people who receive "junk" faxes to sue for at least \$500 per violation (SB 833).
- **"Phishing":** Imposes penalties of up to \$2,500 per violation for using e-mail to deceive consumers into releasing private information, such as credit card numbers, that can be used to defraud the consumer (SB 355).
- **Police pursuits:** Increases penalties for people who flee a police officer to include up to one year in jail for evasion and up to 10 years in prison for a chase that causes death (SB 719).
- **School junk food:** Bans the sale of sodas in high schools and sets fat, sugar and calorie standards for all food, outside of cafeteria lunches, sold in public schools (SB 965).
- **Tracking devices:** Allows the state and counties to track criminals on parole and probation with Global Positioning System devices (SB 619).
- **Transgender individuals:** Bans insurers and healthcare providers from denying coverage solely because a person has changed gender (AB 1586).
- **Transplants:** Prohibits health insurers from refusing to pay for an organ or tissue transplant solely because a patient is infected with HIV (AB 228).
- **Video games:** Bans the sale of violent video games to children under 18 and imposes a \$1,000 fine on retailers who violate the ban. Requires video makers to label the most violent games with a black-and-white "18" sticker (AB 1179).

To get detailed information on any of these bills go to www.leginfo.ca.gov, or call my San Diego office at (619) 645-3133.

Emergency Services Hearing held in San Diego



Senator Kehoe talks about California's Emergency Preparedness at a Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security hearing in San Diego

In November, I chaired a Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security hearing in San Diego.

During the hearing, committee members reviewed our state's fire preparedness and the status of the 48 legislative recommendations made by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Fire Commission in the aftermath of the 2003 firestorms.

Fire and emergency response professionals testified on the current status of California's fire response capabilities, and what remains to be done to ensure our safety.

I look forward to sharing the details and recommendations that will be available in the forthcoming post committee report.

In the meantime, for information on how you can prepare yourself for a disaster, you can go to California's Office of Emergency Services website at www.oes.ca.gov.

The American Red Cross is also a resource for disaster preparedness and can be contacted at www.redcross.org.

For more information on the Joint Committee of Emergency Services and Homeland Security, email me at Senator.Kehoe@sen.ca.gov.

West Arcade Reconstruction in Balboa Park Completed

A little over a year since its groundbreaking, the reconstruction on Balboa Park's West Arcade is completed. While this project was the result of a comprehensive effort by park groups, the City Council, Park & Recreation, and the State of California, it was spearheaded by The Committee of 100 which is a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to preserving Spanish Colonial architecture in the Park.

The original arcade was part of the Science and Education Building, one of the many wonderful Balboa Park buildings built for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. The

1913 architectural plans for the entire building were uncovered, making possible the historically accurate reconstruction of this arcade.

Some San Diegans may remember that a few decades ago, Balboa Park was in great need of care and attention. Fires and crumbling buildings left the park a shadow of its former glory. Thanks to the dedication of some very committed citizens, Park initiatives and improvements have grown dramatically in recent years. In steady succession we have seen new life emerging in this centerpiece of our city.

As the elected official representing the park for 12 years, I have fought for more funding for Balboa Park. In 2002, former Governor Davis announced a \$6 million commitment in state funds for improvements in Balboa Park, earmarked for various improvement projects, including:

- Ornamentation repairs to the Museum of Art and the Casa del Prado
- Painting and stucco repair for the California Tower
- The proposed Balboa Park Veterans Memorial Garden
- Reconstruction of the West Arcade

For information on the Committee of 100, go to their website at: www.c100.org/.



*"In steady succession we
have seen new life
emerging in this
centerpiece of our city."*

Pat DeMarce – A passionate advocate for Balboa Park

One person who was integrally involved in numerous Balboa Park improvement projects was Pat DeMarce, an impassioned community philanthropist and Committee of 100 volunteer who passed away in early December.

Pat loved Balboa Park dearly, and as a community, we've benefited from her devotion. Pat's commitment is visible all over the park:

- *She fought to have the 1915 buildings and arcades designated as National Historic Landmarks.*
- *She worked tirelessly to secure the funds for the restoration of the Casa del Prado, Casa de Balboa, the House of Charm, and the Prado Arcades.*

Pat launched a new life for Balboa Park. I am forever thankful for that.

Because of her leadership and involvement, Balboa Park is the unique and wonderful park it is today for all San Diegans and the world to enjoy.



*Pat DeMarce and
Senator Kehoe in 2003*

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Committee Assignments

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and Communications
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Services, Chair

100% Voting Record on Racial Equality Issues

I am pleased to report that I have received a score of 100 percent from the Applied Research Center on their recently released 2005 Legislative Report Card. The score is based on my support for policies that advance racial equality to close disparities, protect communities of color, and promote civic participation for all Californians.

I am privileged to represent a diverse district, and am honored to support measures that may improve someone's chance of getting a better

job, getting access to healthcare, or sending their child to college.

The 2005 Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity evaluates and grades the Governor and members of the Legislature on their responses to eighteen pieces of legislation that would have the most direct positive effect on communities of color. The report card is broken down into five issue areas: educational equity, economic justice, health equity, civil rights, and criminal justice.

Co-Sponsors of the California Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity 2005 include: California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, California Church Impact, Californians for Justice, and the California NAACP.

The report, designed to assist Californians in evaluating their legislators' support for racial equality issues, can be viewed at http://www.arc.org/crei/downloads/ARCreportcard_press.pdf.

Winter Bill Assistance Available to SDG&E Customers

As winter approaches, managing winter bills will be important for San Diegans. In response to this, the California Public Utilities Commission has recently approved SDG&E's expansion of their customer assistance programs. SDG&E offers a variety of programs to help, including:

- **CARE** – The California Alternate Rates for Energy program provides a 20% discount on monthly gas & electric bills for qualifying households. Now an additional 47,500 customers will be eligible to participate in this program.
- **Energy Team** – Provides FREE energy-saving home improvements such as new energy-efficient appliances and other measures to those with limited incomes and seniors who meet specific income guidelines. Now SDG&E can weatherize an additional 1,550 customers' homes and replace an additional 590 inefficient natural gas furnaces and 800 inefficient refrigerators with high-efficiency units.
- **Neighbor to Neighbor** – This program gives people with a temporary financial hardship help with their energy bills.
- **Business Rebates** – Small- and medium-sized businesses can receive rebates for installing selected energy-efficient lighting, refrigeration, food service equipment and natural gas equipment.

SDG&E customers may visit www.sdge.com for information on energy efficiency rebates, conservation tips and customer assistance program eligibility and application information. Or. call SDG&E at (800) 411-SDGE.

Brochures & California Constitution Available

Various brochures as well as booklets containing the California Constitution are now available from my office. Brochure topics include: Medi-Cal Senior Fact Sheet, Veterans Resource Guide, Identity Theft, Prescription Drug Discount Program for Medicare Recipients, and A Citizen's Guide to Lobbying.

If you would like a free copy of any of these publications, please contact my office at (619) 645-3133 or Senator.Kehoe@sen.ca.gov.